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The library of babel analysis pdf

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By Dr Oliver Tearle, Loughborough University: Jorge Luis Borges' 'The Library of Babel' is a thought-provoking 1941 short story that brings together several trademark Borgesian ideas. Here's what this intriguing tale is all about. ####Summary In this mind-boggling story, the narrator describes a vast and virtually infinite library comprising countless hexagonal rooms with floating staircases and long galleries filled with books. Each book contains every possible combination of 25 symbols - letters, commas, full stops, and spaces - and they're all exactly 410 pages long. The narrator reveals that this labyrinthine library has been in existence since the earliest antiquity and could only have been created by a god. Initially, many books were indecipherable, but as people deciphered some languages, it became clear that the vast majority of books are useless because they're incomprehensible to librarians. Some librarians attempted to cull the collection by removing perceived useless or irrelevant books, but this was futile due to the sheer scale and the existence of hundreds of thousands of near-identical copies of each book. The narrator concludes that the Library of Babel is both infinite and cyclical. ####Analysis Borges' short stories often feature paradoxes and his preoccupation with the idea of the infinite. In 'The Library of Babel,' these themes come together to create a thought-provoking exploration of the nature of knowledge, infinity, and the human condition. The Library of Babel holds secrets to the universe, where paradoxically, infinity meets finite boundaries. The narrator reveals that this library is not just a repository of books but an ever-expanding labyrinth of knowledge. Readers flit between pages, exploring vast combinations, making the library a reflection of the universe's infinite yet boundless nature. Borges' tale blurs lines between library and cosmos, where 'elements' – both book contents and chemical constituents – unite the two realms. The story raises questions about our attempts to decipher the world: are we merely searching for codes amidst an overwhelming sea of information? While some librarians might crack the code, like the one deciphering a Guarani dialect, our chances of understanding the world remain infinitesimally small. as time goes on, they'd produce the complete works of shakespeare simply because their endless output would eventually include all his writings in order; it's a notion explored in borges' tale of pierre menard, who devoted himself to rewriting don quixote word for word, without copying cervantes. against this notion is isaac newton's idea that we know little about the world we live in - he likened himself to a boy on the beach finding pretty shells, unaware of the vast ocean of truth beneath. the library of babel can be seen as a story that highlights humanity's futile attempt to grasp everything, given how much there is to understand - an almost endless amount, in fact.